

WED BUT NOT ONE

Fielding Offers Some Views on Divorce Questions

WHEREIN SOME ARE MISTAKEN

He Relates How Hannah Harris' Hasty Marriage Insisted Thirteen Suits for Divorce.

The good old reliable divorce question has bobbed up again in the last few days, like a broken-bladed jackknife which the rust of ages cannot consume nor capricious mislay. Some eminent clergymen have expressed opinions which, as all of us will admit, are wise and admirable so far as they agree with our own, and mistaken only in the other points.

But it requires almost superhuman foresight to predict the outcome of such an act as marriage. For instance, I knew a woman who married a wealthy man at eleven o'clock in the morning with D. Q. & Z. R. R. preferred at 110 and all his money in it. Almost everybody thought the stock was going higher, and the bride was warmly congratulated. But at three p. m. D. Q. & Z. was down to 87 1/2; and she had to hunt



THE TRAINMAN DOES HIS BEST.

all over the United States to find a place where a cruel injury of that sort was held to be ground for divorce.

The larger part of my intimate knowledge of this question is derived from my attendance at several sessions of a divorce court. This experience changed the whole current of my life. I was a reporter then, and dealt with facts; but in listening to the witnesses who appeared in that court I got my first idea of making a living by fiction exclusively. Such is the influence of example upon the young.

It was in Boston, and the opportunities to learn about hasty marriages were unexcelled. For much of the time that I was in that city, where women are so greatly in the majority that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not offer his hand and heart in vain. I remember the case of a "line-man" in the employ of a telegraph company, who passed through a little town inspecting a wire. He was walking along with his head thrown back and his gaze fixed upon the tops of the poles, when he ran straight into the arms of a young woman who, also, was starting up into the air. She nestled on his coat collar a few moments, and then told him that, though his conduct had been somewhat impetuous for so short an acquaintance, she would be his if he would only tell her what in the world he had been looking at. She had been watching him all the way up the street, and was fairly dying with curiosity. Well, when he followed the wire into the next township that afternoon, she followed him, and they were married. But one day, a few months later, he forgot to tell her which way the wire was to lead him; and the court's decree in this case was given on the ground of desertion. Three months later she married a traveling piano tuner who visited her father's house professionally. She and her husband and the strings of the piano were never in harmony afterward, and the decree in this case was for cruelty.

There seems to be little use in warning women against marriages of this kind. The deep student of the subject



HOLDING WHISTLES WITH THE ARTICLE.

will never feel that he has got down to the root of the matter until he has stated with confidence what makes a woman prefer the man who is best fitted to make her miserable. In common with all other good men I have spent much time in curious contemplation of the popularity of the scamp. Until we, who possess these traits which make him happy, can learn to counteract the fascinations of the whiffled, marriage will never be for women the safe and quiet refuge that it should be. I would like a testimonial from my wife to accompany these lines, but, unfortunately, at the time of this writing, she has just stepped down four flights of stairs to see a scuttled of coal from the cellar.

How strangely love grows up in the feminine heart! I remember a very pathetic case. I wrote it up in detail, although counsel for the defendant offered me ten dollars if I wouldn't. The sweet was crowded out of the paper, anyway, and again I learned that a clear conscience is a tenant that is sometimes behind with the rent. The complainant in this case was Mrs. John Brown, who asked for a decree of divorce on the ground of desertion. She also asked for permission to resume her maiden name of Harris, promising that she would not use it any longer than should be absolutely necessary.

The evidence in this case was quite ordinary, but the facts, on the contrary, were novel and entertaining. It appears that Hannah Harris lived two miles out of Connor's Corners, on the line of the Maine & Boston Bay railroad. She kept house for her grandparents, who lived within a hundred feet of the railroad track. She did not ride much in the cars, but they were useful to her because there was a train every forenoon which she used as a culinary signal. Hannah was a true woman, and couldn't keep a clock within four hours of the correct time, and she frequently had high words with her grandfather who came over from the Corners for his dinner. By and by Hannah discovered that if she put the potatoes on to boil as soon as she heard the forenoon train go by, they would be done when her grandfather arrived. And thus a tender feeling grew up in her heart for the engineer who was such a nice, convenient person. She felt sure that he must be a young man of very steady habits to be so regular in passing the house. Hannah could see him sometimes at the window of the cab, and, though he slipped by the house at the rate of fifty miles an hour, she was sure he was very nice looking.

One day when the forenoon train collided with Hannah's grandfather's cow, and this purely fortuitous event proved almost as serious for Hannah as it was for the cow. The train was derailed, and Hannah went down, as any other kind-hearted woman would have done, to tell the men how to put it on the track again. She met the engineer.

Ah, well—why should I dwell upon that scene? They were married by a clergyman from Camden, N. J., who chanced to be among the passengers; and, when the train proceeded on its way, Hannah was sitting on her trunk in the baggage car.

John Brown's engine pulled the cars as far as Dead River Junction, where, as was customary, it was replaced by another. It had been John's intention to board the train, but somehow he missed it, and his bride went on without him. Hannah was, of course, entirely unconscious of this change. The train sped on, and came to a stand-still at last in the station at Bangor. Hannah was so impatient that she could not wait for her husband to come to her in the baggage car.



THE FIRST MEETING.

gave car. She ran forward to look for him.

"Where, oh where, is my husband?" said Hannah.

"Who might your husband be, ma'am?" inquired a trainhand.

"The engineer," cried Hannah; "we were married to-day."

"Well, I swear!" exclaimed the trainhand; "an' him with a wife an' nine children right here in Bangor."

Hannah fainted, of course, but the cool-headed railroad man bathed her temples tenderly with the long-handled brush that he had been using to clean the car windows, and she revived.

Meanwhile Brown had sent a telegram directing Hannah to take the next train back, and meet him in Boston. He received this reply:

"John Brown, you will be prosecuted for bigamy."

Brown took this as a friendly warning that Hannah had another husband; and, desiring to avoid trouble, he threw up his job and fled to the west. Hannah hurried to Boston, longing to confront the deceiver. She inquired for him at the company's office and learned that there were seven engineers named John Brown employed by the company. As to the one who had been at the throttle of the engine which killed old man Harris' cow, the official of the company refused to give any information. He said that it was against the rules of the corporation to say anything in case of an accident. The story of the marriage he looked upon as an effort to give evidence in a suit for damages on account of the killing of the cow.

In this emergency Hannah consulted an able divorce lawyer, who told her that her only course was to bring seven suits against the seven John Browns employed by the railroad. Hannah consented to this plan and the lawyer collected seven fees. Then the suits were brought. But the lawyer's regular witnesses had no experience in cases like this, so he advised her to abandon her ground of complaint, and allow him to proceed in the usual way. He then invented seven different scandals, one for each of the John Browns. These coming to the ears of the six other Mrs. John Browns, resulted in six more suits for divorce, some of which are still pending, having been delayed in one way and another during the intervening two years.

I will not trace their details. There is enough in this brief and truthful record to show how careful one should be in this important matter of marriage. And I would emphasize the need of care especially because experience shows that a person who makes one foolish marriage will go on making them just as fast as the law can accomplish their dissolution, and it is an awful habit to get into.

HOWARD FIELDING.

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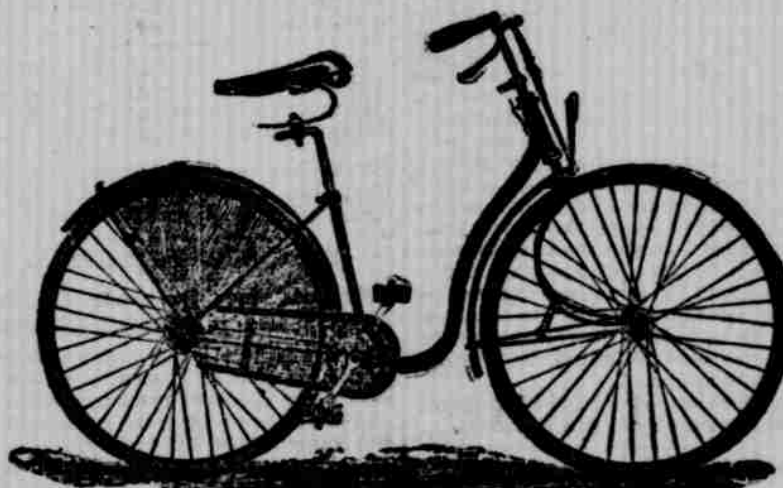
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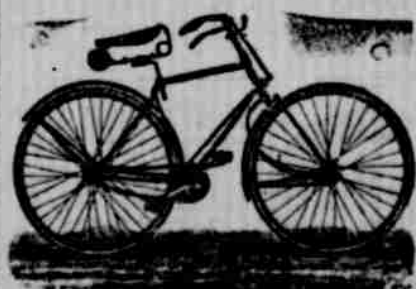
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that never comes, spells of feeling afraid or uncertain, sometimes low spirits, you are suffering from nervous debility and exhaustion of nerve power which may end in utter prostration, insanity and death.

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